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Letter dated 31 March 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1575 (2004), 1639 (2005), 1722 (2006), 1785 (2007), 1845 (2008), 1895 (2009), 1948 (2010), 2019 (2011), 2074 (2012), 2123 (2013) and 2183 (2014), I have the honour to convey the attached letter dated 14 March 2016, which I received from the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, transmitting the forty-first report on the activities of the European Union military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (see annex). The report covers the period from 1 March to 31 August 2015.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon

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Annex

In accordance with Security Council resolutions 1575 (2004), 1639 (2005), 1722 (2006), 1785 (2007), 1845 (2008), 1895 (2009), 1948 (2010), 2019 (2011), 2074 (2012), 2123 (2013) and 2183 (2014), please find enclosed the forty-first report on Operation Althea to the United Nations Security Council (see enclosure).

(*Signed*) Federica **Mogherini**

Enclosure

Report of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the activities of the European Union military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

I. Introduction

1. The present report covers the period from 1 March to 31 August 2015.

2. The Security Council, in its resolutions 1575 (2004), 1639 (2005), 1722 (2006), 1785 (2007), 1845 (2008), 1895 (2009), 1948 (2010), 2019 (2011), 2074 (2012), 2123 (2013) and 2183 (2014), requests that Member States, acting through or in cooperation with the European Union, report to the Council on the activities of the European Union military operation (EUFOR) at least at six-monthly intervals. This is the forty-first such report.

II. Political background

3. The latest reporting period on the EUFOR Althea mission has most importantly been marked by the final formation of institutions following the October 2014 general elections and the split and reshuffling of the Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) Federation coalition. Despite this in-fighting, important steps have been made in the adoption and implementation of the reform agenda subsequently approved by BiH authorities, which has marked a significant departure from the prolonged period of stalemate and lack of progress on European Union integration. However, some challenges remain in delivering the reform agenda and, as already underlined in previous reports, similar challenges have remained in the difficult political environment and dynamics, brought to a head in the run-up to and during the Srebrenica commemorations.

4. The formation of BiH institutions after the October elections took place within a reasonable time period, especially when taking into account the complexity of the country's constitutional structures. The Republika Srpska (RS) authorities were formed first, and then the new BiH Council of Ministers and FBiH Governments were sworn in on 31 March. However, less than two and a half months after the inauguration of the FBiH Government, the work of the Government and Parliament in the FBiH was hampered by in-fighting within the coalition, a government reshuffle and a reduced majority in Parliament.

5. In line with the Council conclusions of 15 December 2014, and the Council conclusions of 16 March, the Stabilization and Association Agreement with BiH entered into force on 1 June 2015 following the written commitment to engage in reforms agreed by the BiH Presidency, signed by BiH political leaders and endorsed by the BiH Parliament. In the frame of the renewed European Union approach to BiH, the BiH State and Entity Governments adopted a Reform agenda for BiH 2015-2018 in July and an action plan in October. The reform agenda sets out an ambitious set of socioeconomic, rule of law and public administration reforms that will be implemented with the assistance of the European Union and the international financial institutions.

6. While progress was made on the European Union path, the twentieth commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide in July negatively affected relations within BiH and between Sarajevo and Belgrade. The arrest of Naser Oric, wartime Republic of BiH Army commander in Srebrenica, Russia's veto of the UK-proposed resolution on the genocide in Srebrenica at the United Nations Security Council, followed by a physical attack on Serbian Prime Minister Vucic during the commemoration on 11 July, demonstrated the fragility of the peace and reconciliation process in BiH and the wider region, and the use of painful wartime events for narrow political gain.

7. In the Republika Srpska, RS President Milorad Dodik proposed a referendum challenging the authority of the State-level judiciary. On 15 July the RS National Assembly decided to hold the referendum, which was immediately challenged by the Bosniak Caucus of the RS Council of Peoples, who raised a vital national interest motion before the RS Constitutional Court. In August the Court declared the case admissible. Dodik's intentions with the referendum remain unclear, and his statements are often contradictory, but his divisive rhetoric against the State institutions intensified in the reporting period.

8. Separately, during the party convention, Dodik's SNSD has proclaimed a referendum of independence, implying Dodik's separatist notions, unless "respect for the BiH constitutional structure was 're-established' by the end of 2017". While supporting the reform agenda, Dodik continued to portray State institutions as illegitimate and imposed and claimed that in order for BiH to fulfil the Written Commitment, a thorough cost-efficiency examination of State-level agencies is needed.

9. State and Entity Governments need to accelerate their efforts on pressing socioeconomic and other challenges, in consultation with the European Union. BiH is encouraged to swiftly deliver on the implementation of the necessary reforms in order to, inter alia, enable further progress in its European Union integration process. While making considerable progress, BiH continued to lag behind in the region in the reporting period.

10. In the aftermath of the devastating floods in BiH in May and August 2014, the post-disaster reconstruction efforts continued. During the reporting period, the European Union Special Representative remained engaged in promoting and leveraging the €43.5 million European Union floods recovery programme. It continued reinforcing the programme's strategic communication elements and supporting political facilitation of its implementation on the ground, coordinating actively with key domestic and international stakeholders on flood recovery-related issues. More commitment from BiH authorities would increase the efficiency and pace of the recovery process.

III. Security situation and EUFOR activities

11. The security situation in BiH was, overall, calm and stable during the reporting period, yet stability has not been entrenched. The reporting period saw no threat to the safe and secure environment, even though the attack on the Zvornik police station in April, in which an armed individual killed one policeman and injured two others, was cause for concern.

12. Some actions were taken by the political leadership to start addressing the socioeconomic problems. However, the dire socioeconomic situation remained a prime factor of concern requiring effective and sustained reform efforts. These were further aggravated by the unaddressed conflict legacy which resurfaced around the Srebrenica commemoration. In addition, divisive and secessionist rhetoric persisted in the reporting period. Social and State cohesion, as well as good neighbourly relations, were challenged on a few occasions. The root causes of the socioeconomic tensions have to be addressed to achieve long-term stability. Moreover, global challenges such as the return of foreign fighters and mixed migratory flows may in the future put additional pressure on this relatively fragile security environment and on the law enforcement agencies.

13. As regards the capacities of the BiH law enforcement agencies, while some improvements were made in response to the coordination challenges identified in February 2014, also in the area of training and equipment, shortfalls remain. There are substantial, structural and tactical issues within the police still to be solved. In particular, command and control at the strategic and operational levels remains weak and law enforcement agencies remain fragmented, uncoordinated and vulnerable to political manipulation and obstruction.

14. Operation Althea continued to implement its capacity-building and training tasks successfully while engaging in a more integrated approach with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in that area. The EUFOR Althea headquarters stood ready to support the BiH authorities' efforts to maintain the safe and secure environment. The Operation is well configured to deliver its main efforts, but continued political obstacles and shortfalls on the Armed Forces of BiH (AFBiH) side, as well as a large amount of resources dedicated to guarding and managing an obsolete surplus of weapons and ammunition, still needed to be fully addressed for the AFBiH to entirely benefit from the capacity-building and training offer. EUFOR over-the-horizon reserve forces, shared with NATO, are still short of two battalions.

15. The AFBiH managed to increase the disposal rate of ammunition, weapons and explosives surplus and make progress in inventory, thanks partly to the support provided by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union and other partners in the international community.

IV. Outlook

16. The positive momentum on the European Union path in BiH and progress achieved so far reduced the stalemate that BiH was facing in the past years. Political in-fighting along ethnic lines, together with the repeated call for a referendum and divisive rhetoric in the RS, created headwinds to European Union efforts on the ground and will continue to burden the long-term pace and success of the reforms.

17. For this reason, the coming months, in particular the implementation of the reform agenda, will be crucial for the European Union to consider a potential BiH application for European Union membership. The reconciliation in BiH and within the region must also remain a priority.

18. The security situation in BiH was, overall, calm and stable during the reporting period; yet stability has not been entrenched. The socioeconomic environment continues to remain a serious problem, aggravated by the ineffective

disaster relief by BiH authorities in the aftermath of the 2014 floods. Moreover, global challenges such as the return of foreign fighters and mixed migratory flows may in the future put additional pressure on this relatively fragile security environment and on the law enforcement agencies. Therefore, the capacities of those agencies need to be further improved by the BiH authorities.

19. While important challenges remain, the renewed approach by the European Union should be seized in order to retain a positive political momentum.